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**D R A F T**  
**17 May 1974**

**MEMORANDUM FOR:** The President  
The White House

**SUBJECT:** Report on the Strategic Threat by the President's  
Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board

1. Admiral Anderson has made available to me a copy of his letter to you dated April 30, 1974, containing PFIAB's annual assessment of the strategic threat. It would not be appropriate for me to comment on the Board's recommendations about US strategic policy and the public presentation of it, or about the priority which should be accorded to certain US R&D programs. I would, however, like to comment on three other aspects of the Board's conclusions--the prospects for Soviet strategic superiority, intelligence requirements to support US strategic policy, and the uncertainties in intelligence estimates.

2. In the estimate of "Soviet Forces for Intercontinental Attack" (NIE 11-8-73) which I submitted to you with the concurrence of the United States Intelligence Board in January of this year, a distinction was drawn between two different measures of strategic power. One involves equality or superiority in quantitative terms. The second considers deterrent and war-fighting capabilities. The message of NIE 11-8-73 is that:

--The US faces very substantial improvements in the USSR's  
strategic attack forces.

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--By the early 1980's these improvements are likely to convey an image of superiority to those who ascribe significance to quantitative measures.

--While through these improvements the Soviets will increase their counterforce capabilities--notably against the US Minuteman force--they are not likely to be able to negate the US deterrent under any circumstances we can foresee over the next ten years.

3. The forecast in the NIE assumed the future development of US forces along the lines now programmed and assumed no SALT constraints other than those of the existing agreements. An important corollary of this forecast, in my view, is that Soviet policy could gain considerable additional weight in the calculations of other nations despite the continued ultimate effectiveness of the US deterrent.

4. The SALT agreements placed a ceiling on certain largely quantitative aspects of the growth of the strategic forces of the two sides. The qualitative improvement of strategic forces, unconstrained by SALT I, has proceeded unabated. This is an area in which the US retains a substantial lead. I believe that Soviet actions since the signing of the SALT agreements reflect, not only an attempt to keep up with the competition--out of concern for such US programs as B-1, Trident, and Minuteman improvement--but also an

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opportunistic desire to press ahead and achieve a margin of superiority if they can. In my view, the Soviets perceive themselves as essentially equal in overall strategic power today. However, I do not believe (as does the PFIAB) that the Soviets perceive themselves as approaching the threshold of overall superiority in strategic power. How far they will press any attempt to achieve superiority will depend to a considerable degree on US negotiating and defense policies, in particular on our ability to persuade the Soviets that:

- they cannot continue indefinitely to have both substantially improving strategic capabilities and the benefits of detente;
- non-restraint on their part will produce offsetting US reactions;
- restraint on their part will be reciprocated.

5. I have reexamined the possible impact of Soviet strategic developments on the credibility of the US deterrent, and I continue to believe, as indicated in NIE 11-8-73, that under no foreseeable circumstances in the next ten years are the Soviets likely to develop and deploy forces of the magnitude and quality necessary to reduce damage to themselves to acceptable levels by a first strike against US strategic forces. I believe the Soviets would have to calculate that the US would be able to make a devastating reply to any Soviet surprise attack. In reaching these conclusions in the NIE and in my

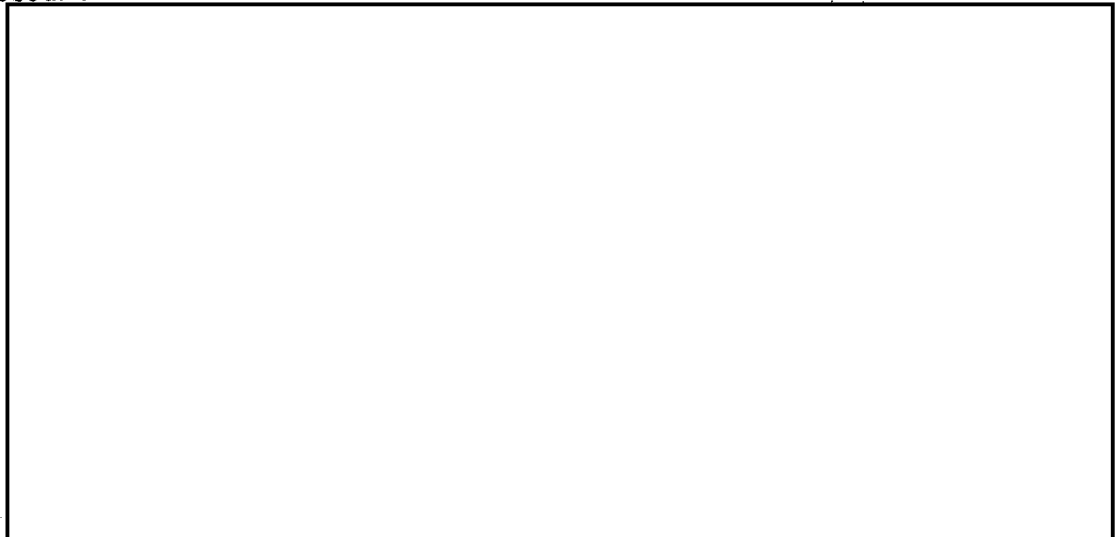
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reexamination of them, I have considered possible damage levels on the two sides as revealed by engagement analyses between US and Soviet strategic forces, including all three elements of the US strategic triad. There are obvious uncertainties in such analyses, but in reaching my judgment I have taken account of:



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6. I agree fully with PFIAB's concern over the need to improve the substantive intelligence required to support US policy objectives, especially in areas of significant Soviet R&D effort or potential. In the three critical areas the Board mentioned--accuracies of Soviet missiles, prospects for detection of US missile submarines, and the strategic implications of Soviet laser developments--we currently have intensive interagency study efforts underway in order to provide policy officials with a definitive as

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possible an understanding of Soviet programs and capabilities. These three subjects are listed among the Key Intelligence Questions toward which I have directed the entire intelligence community to focus its attention.

7. I appreciate and will pursue the Board's suggestion that CIA participate in the preparation of the "RISOP" (Red Integrated Strategic Operations Plan) used in wargaming the SIOP. DIA participates now and uses intelligence community estimates, but as the gaming becomes more complex with more SIOP options, CIA may be able to contribute more than hitherto to development of the RISOP. I will undertake to explore with the Secretary of Defense and the Joint Chiefs of Staff how CIA can best contribute to this aspect of operational planning for our strategic forces.

8. Finally, I agree with the PFIAB findings that intelligence estimates require the keenest possible technical evaluations. To that end we are experimenting on ways to communicate more precisely the degree of confidence we have in our judgments, particularly on technical data. One of our interagency studies is addressing the prospects for determining the accuracies of Soviet ICBMs in the period about five years from now, in an effort to narrow the uncertainties as well as to alert users of intelligence

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to them. The strategic relationship over the next decade is likely to be increasingly sensitive to uncertainties in such qualitative factors as missile accuracies, which are more difficult to measure than quantitative elements such as the numbers of launchers or weapons.

W. E. Colby

cc: Admiral Anderson, Chairman PFIAB  
Hon. Henry A. Kissinger, Assistant to  
the President for National Security Affairs  
Hon. James R. Schlesinger, Secretary of  
Defense

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